



SIDE EVENT

Briefing on the Key Messages and Recommendations of ECA's Regional Integration Flagship Reports (1) Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA) IX: Next Steps for the AfCFTA (2) African Regional Integration Index Report 2019

Background

African leaders have intensified their efforts to promote regional integration, as evidenced by the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in March 2018. The work of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and partners continue to contribute to this agenda with policy-oriented technical research, including through the reports that are the focus of this side event: (a) "Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA) IX: next steps for the African Continental Free Trade Area report and (b) African Regional Integration Index 2019.

The ninth edition in the series, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa* (known as *ARIA IX 2019*) responds to Agenda 2063 of the African Union, establishing a "deep" trade agreement among African countries that goes beyond the liberalization of goods and services to address "behind the border" trade issues. Accordingly, the AfCFTA phase II negotiations are structured around three topics: competition policy; intellectual property rights; and investment. *ARIA IX* examines the substantive issues and options for developing protocols on each of these topics to help negotiators from member States achieve the most from the phase II negotiations. In anticipation that AfCFTA

will enter into force in the coming weeks, given the strong momentum behind the ratification process, the report further discusses the next steps for the implementation of the Agreement. Recognizing the growing importance of digital trade, as business conducted through e-commerce platforms and e-payment systems continue to proliferate, the report assesses the implications and makes the case for including cooperation in digital trade as a separate AfCFTA protocol.

The 2019 edition of the *African Regional Integration Index* (known as *ARII*) will be the second edition in the series. The main objective of *ARII* is to monitor and evaluate the status of economic integration among African countries. The report provides a basis for member States to track their progress within their respective regional economic communities and within the continent. The preliminary results of the 2019 report indicate that regional integration in Africa remains low across the five dimensions that are analyzed (trade integration, regional infrastructure, productive integration, free movement of people and macroeconomic integration). South Africa emerges as the most integrated country, particularly in regard to trade integration, regional infrastructure and productive integration; with South Sudan as the least integrated mainly because of its modest performance in regional infrastructure and financial integration.

Objective

The objectives of this event are:

- To provide key messages and recommendations resulting from the African regional integration research and engage member States in considering how best to approach the AfCFTA phase II negotiations
- To indicate progress made by ECA, African Union Commission and African Development Bank towards finalizing the African Regional Integration Index report (2019) by presenting some preliminary results and the policy recommendations that emanate from them

Expected outcomes

- Inform on regional integration dynamics in Africa and specific policy recommendations on how to support the regional integration process
- Indicate the next steps for implementing the AfCFTA agreement and specific recommendations on options for the AfCFTA phase II negotiations

Target audience

- Officials of the ministries of trade, finance, industry, economic development and planning
- The private sector, civil society organizations and academia
- Development partners and regional and international organizations

For further information, please contact

Mr. Jamie MacLeod
Trade Policy Expert
African Trade Policy Center
Regional Integration and Trade Division
Economic Commission for Africa
Tel.: +251 (0) 11 544 3813
Email: macleodj@un.org

Ms. Wafa Aidi
Economic Affairs Officer
Market Institutions Section
Regional Integration and Trade Division
Economic Commission for Africa
Tel.: +251 (0) 11 544 5672
Email: aidiw@un.org